

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 525

EA 016 959

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TITLE Predicting and Comparing Role Stress and Burnout for Supportive Service Groups and Classroom Teachers.  
PUB DATE 84  
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 23-27, 1984).  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Burnout; Elementary Secondary Education; Job Satisfaction; Negative Attitudes; \*Professional Personnel; Psychological Patterns; Reading Teachers; Role Conflict; School Counselors; School Psychologists; School Social Workers; \*Stress Variables; Teachers

## ABSTRACT

Using a survey of 1,656 Connecticut public school employees, this study compared burnout and stress variables for five groups: classroom teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, guidance counselors, and reading specialists. Questionnaires included a burnout inventory, role-behavior survey, and request for demographic information. Major variables were limited to three measures of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment), two measures of role stress (role conflict and role ambiguity), and group membership. Generally, classroom teachers were found to exhibit the highest levels of burnout; other groups varied in their rankings on the variables studied. School psychologists and guidance counselors, the study showed, reported the highest levels of role stress; classroom teachers reported the lowest level of role stress. Overall, group membership was found to be a good predictor of role conflicts and burnout, but not of role ambiguity. Moreover, role conflicts and ambiguity were determined to be major predictors of emotional exhaustion. (JW)

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## PREDICTING AND COMPARING ROLE STRESS AND BURNOUT FOR SUPPORTIVE SERVICE GROUPS AND CLASSROOM

### TEACHERS

The time in which we live has been characterized by a number of authors (Horney, 1964; Toffler, 1972; Terkel, 1974) as a period of rapid change, a time in which large numbers of people are being forced to function beyond a healthy operative range. As a result, individuals in a wide variety of occupations are searching for strategies to ward off excessive environmental and job-related stress. Schools as work places are not exempt from societal and occupational pressures. In fact, as agencies for society's transitions they mirror the difficulties experienced in other sectors (Reitman, 1971). Thus, an alarming number of teachers are beginning to react against the change they are forced to make. With help, some are able to continue to function within the school environment; others are being forced to leave. The fate of teachers in various roles within the school system is the subject of this research.

Relatively recent movements such as affirmative action, racial integration, bilingual education, education for special needs students, and mainstreaming have all had dramatic effects on school programs and staff assignments. So too have decreases in school revenues and public confidence in the schools, and increases in demands for teacher competence and higher student test scores (Turk and Litt, 1981). However, prior to the late 1970's few investigations considered the effects of these changes upon educators. In fact, it was not until teachers began to act on their perceptions of job strain by "cutting out" or "burning out" that their role stress became a matter of more than passing concern.

### Research Concerning Stress Among Educators

Initial investigations concerning role stress in public schools were conducted with administrators and teachers who had not been trained to deal with a rapidly changing society (Comer, 1980). The 1950's and 1960's had been decades of mass questioning of the means and ends of education. By 1980 the confusion over goals and roles became so pronounced that Hain observed: "The teacher doesn't know who she has to please. She's not as autonomous as she once was." (TIME, June, 1980, 59).

During the period between 1960 and 1980 school people were also experiencing an increasing loss of control over their own environment and a decline in political strength. As early as 1974 Campbell cited three reasons for this overall decline in the political strength of the school: (1) shifting population characteristics resulting in a greater number of aged who were competing for funding; (2) lessening support for public schools among high socio-economic and highly educated persons; and (3) declines in school environments coinciding with reduced confidence in the belief that more money will produce higher student achievement (Iwanicki, 1982)

Pronounced role stress emerged from these major social, political, and economic shifts. Uncertainty concerning priorities, the growth of internal and external pressure groups (Gupta, 1979; Turk and Litt, 1981), increased expectations and work load (Berger, 1980), porous job descriptions (Keith, 1979), and reduced decision-making (Iwanicki, 1982; Lortie, 1975) lessened teacher's satisfaction. These shifts also created particular sources of role stress including inter-sender conflict, work overload, and person-role conflict.

#### Research Concerning Burnout Among Educators

Initial investigations of burnout were conducted by Maslach and Jackson (1978). Their research indicated that individuals in a number of helping professions were withdrawing from work because of excessive and accumulated stress and dissatisfaction. Competent, well-meaning human service workers suffered emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a loss of sense of personal accomplishment. Eventually, these professionals reported a lack of positive feelings, sympathy, and respect for their clients or patients (Maslach and Pines, 1977).

Based in large part on the work of these psychologists, educational researchers began to examine the causes, intensity, and prevalence of role stress and burnout among teacher and administrator groups (i.e., Schwab, 1980; Schwab and Iwanicki, 1981; Crane, 1981; Anderson, 1980; Fimian, 1983). However, to date little research has been conducted on stress and burnout with the supportive service groups which operate within the schools (i.e. reading specialists, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers). In school organizations these groups are considered specialists who often intervene in times of difficulty and offer guidance and service to students, staff, and parents. Given the nature of these positions, supportive service groups may be susceptible to the same range of potential stressors as teachers, including low salaries, heavy caseloads, inordinate amounts of paperwork, bureaucratic "hassles," and feelings of isolation. They may also be subject to a variety of unique stressors relating to their role and position within school structures. Research from industry suggests that a group's position within the organizational hierarchy generates particular

stresses which can alter the impact of common stressors (House, 1970; Miles, 1976).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to relate the growing body of literature on role stress and burnout in educational settings for five teacher groups occupying differing positions within schools. Three questions guided this research. The first asked whether there was a significant difference in the role stress levels experienced by each of the teacher groups considered in this study. The second asked whether there was a relationship between role stress experienced by each teacher group and their perceived intensity of burnout. The final question asked whether the perceived intensity of burnout differs for the five teacher groups. As noted above, the literature includes no research comparing these variables.

#### Procedures

All members of four supportive service groups in Connecticut public schools and a simple random sample of 5% of the classroom teachers were asked to participate in this research. The supportive service groups include: school social workers (n = 328); school psychologists (n = 501); guidance counselors (n = 1188); and reading specialists (n=964). All groups were contacted by mail at their work sites in March-April, 1982. The response rates were as follows: school social workers, 26.8%; school psychologists, 42.5%; guidance counselors, 40.4%; reading specialists, 34.6%. A total of 31% of the 1648 classroom teachers in the sample also responded. A total of 1656 of the 2408 responses were suitable for analysis.

#### Instrumentation and Data Analyses

All potential respondents were sent a questionnaire entitled: The Survey for Supportive Service Groups and Teachers. This instrument contained the intensity dimension of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach and Jackson (1979), the Role Questionnaire (RQ) designed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), and a series of questions which provided the following demographic information: age, sex, years in present position, total years in education, marital status, assignment level, and size of community. Each of the components of the survey will be described in turn.

The RQ, which was used to assess role stress, is a fourteen item instrument with a seven part response scale ranging from 1 (definitely not true of my job) to 7 (extremely true of my job). The construct validity and reliability of the two factors of the RQ were reported by Schuler, Aldag, and Lirtzman (1970). Study of the validity and reliability of this instrument for educators (Schwab, Iwanicki, and Pierson, 1983) identified two separate factors. Factor I, which is labeled Role Conflict and which

contains eight items, concerns the compatibility and congruency of the requirements of a role. This factor can be divided into conflict which emerges from interpersonal stressors and conflict which originates in conflicting task demands. The second factor is Role Ambiguity. The six items of this scale concern the clarity of existing job guidelines, certainty about one's duties and responsibilities, and the ability to predict the consequences of behaviors on the job. The alpha reliability coefficients for Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity are .86 and .85, respectively (Schwab, Iwanicki, and Pierson, 1993).

The MBI is a 22 item instrument which provides a measure of the respondent's perceptions of burnout along three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. On the complete Inventory respondents make two ratings along a seven point scale ranging from 1 (very mild) to 7 (very strong). The first rating is for frequency; the second is for intensity. Schwab and Iwanicki, (1981) completed a cross-validation study of the MBI for educators and found that correlations between the two ratings ranged from .75 to .94. Given the magnitude of the correlations they suggested that one dimension could be used. As a result, only the intensity dimension was used in this research.

Persons scoring high on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and low on the Personal Accomplishment subscale are apt to perceive themselves as suffering from burnout. However, no "burnout" classification is provided. Evidence for the validity and reliability of this instrument has been reported by Maslach and Jackson (1979). Content, construct concurrent, and discriminant validity data has also been reported by Hackman and Oldham (1975). The alpha reliability coefficients for the intensity dimension of each aspect of burnout are as follows: Emotional Exhaustion .87; Depersonalization .75; and Personal Accomplishment .77 (Maslach and Jackson, 1979).

Turning now to the analysis, the demographic variables were used as covariates in the hierarchical multiple regression procedures used in this research. Covariates were selected because of their link to role stress with other teacher groups (Crane, 1981; Schwab, 1980; Anderson, 1981; Fimian, 1982). Research questions one and three, which examined the effect of teacher group membership upon perceptions of role stress and burnout respectively, were analyzed using SPSS hierarchical multiple regression procedures. Demographic variables were forced into the equation at the first step. The components of teacher group membership were allowed to float into the equation at the second step. Following a significant omnibus test Scheffe post hoc procedures were used to analyze significant differences between teacher groups. The second research question was also analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression procedures. Demographic variables were forced into the equation at step one followed by the components of role stress were allowed to float into the equation at the second step for each teacher group.

## Results

As noted above, three questions guided this research. The major variables included in these analyses are the three measures of burnout (i.e., Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment), the two measures of role stress (i.e., Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity), and teacher group membership. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the measures of burnout and role conflict by teacher group.

Considering the intensity of burnout, Table 1 indicates that classroom teachers exhibited the highest levels of each aspect of burnout. School social workers tended to report lower comparative levels of burnout recording the lowest level of burnout along the Depersonalization dimension and the second lowest levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment. School psychologists tended to report mid-range levels of burnout, while guidance counselors and reading specialists provided less stable reactions. Guidance counselors, for example, reported the second highest levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization but the lower level of burnout along the Personal Accomplishment dimension. Meanwhile, reading specialists reported the least burnout along the Emotional Exhaustion dimension, a mid-range level of Depersonalization, and the second highest burnout along the Personal Accomplishment dimension.

Considering role stress, school psychologists and guidance counselors reported the highest levels of role stress. They were followed by school social workers who report a mid-range level of Role Conflict and the second highest level of Role Ambiguity. Reading specialists ranked next with a mid-range level of Role Ambiguity and the lowest level of Role Conflict. Classroom teachers reported the lowest comparative levels of role stress with the second lowest level of Role Conflict and the lowest level of Role Ambiguity. The remainder of this section presents the results relating to the major research questions.

### Teacher Group Comparisons of Perceptions of Role Stress

The first major purposes of this research was to compare the perceived levels of role stress among the five teacher groups considered in this study. The results of the multiple regression procedures used to examine this purpose follows. Effects coding and Scheffe post hoc procedures were used to compare teacher groups.

Table 2 indicates that teacher group membership is a significant predictor of Role Conflict even after the effects of the demographic variables had been removed ( $F = 75.96$ ). Scheffe post hoc procedures indicated that three supportive service groups reported significantly greater levels of Role Conflict than did classroom teachers and reading specialists. School psychologists and guidance counselors differed from classroom teachers at the

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranks for the Major Variables By  
Teacher Group

| Variable | Teacher Group |      |              |      |           |      |            |      |           |      |
|----------|---------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|------|------------|------|-----------|------|
|          | Soc. Worker   |      | Psychologist |      | Counselor |      | Specialist |      | Teacher   |      |
|          | $\bar{X}$     | SD   | $\bar{X}$    | SD   | $\bar{X}$ | SD   | $\bar{X}$  | SD   | $\bar{X}$ | SD   |
| MBI      |               |      |              |      |           |      |            |      |           |      |
| Emot     | 2.897         | 1.14 | 3.048        | 1.12 | 3.132     | 1.32 | 2.873      | 1.19 | 3.136     | 1.24 |
| Exh.     |               | (4)  |              | (3)  |           | (2)  |            | (5)  |           | (1)  |
| Deper.   | 1.735         | 0.80 | 1.799        | 0.81 | 2.073     | 0.97 | 1.906      | 0.99 | 2.233     | 1.04 |
|          |               | (5)  |              | (4)  |           | (2)  |            | (3)  |           | (1)  |
| Per.     | 5.149         | 0.07 | 5.114        | 0.83 | 5.280     | 0.88 | 4.924      | 0.99 | 4.921     | 0.88 |
| Accomp   |               | (4)  |              | (3)  |           | (5)  |            | (2)  |           | (1)  |
| RQ       |               |      |              |      |           |      |            |      |           |      |
| Role     | 3.826         | 1.21 | 4.013        | 1.30 | 4.161     | 1.36 | 3.487      | 1.35 | 3.641     | 1.37 |
| Con.     |               | (3)  |              | (2)  |           | (1)  |            | (5)  |           | (4)  |
| Role     | 3.229         | 1.15 | 3.398        | 1.22 | 3.358     | 1.28 | 3.273      | 1.72 | 3.106     | 1.26 |
| Amb.     |               | (4)  |              | (1)  |           | (2)  |            | (3)  |           | (5)  |

Burnout increases with a high score on Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and a low score on Personal Accomplishment. Ranks range from (1) highest level of burnout and role stress to (5) the lowest comparative level.

.01 level, while school social workers and reading specialists differed at the .05 level. School psychologists, school social workers and guidance counselors also reported significantly higher

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results to Determine The Effect of Teacher Group Membership on Each Subscale of the RQ

| Variable                 | Scales of the RQ         |                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|                          | Role Conflict            | Role Ambiguity        |
|                          | Increase in R            | Increase in R         |
| Demographic Variables    | 0.03718                  | 0.00942               |
| Teacher Group Membership | 0.07387<br>(F = 75.96)** | 0.09996<br>(F = .217) |
| b weights for Groups     |                          |                       |
| School Social Workers    | 0.03794                  | 0.05051               |
| School Psychologists     | 0.16660                  | 0.14780               |
| Reading Specialists      | -0.33593                 | -0.04301              |
| Guidance Counselors      | 0.37832                  | 0.08226               |
| Classroom Teachers       | -0.24693                 | -0.23756              |

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

levels of Role Conflict than reading specialists at the .01 level.

Considering the second aspect of role stress, Role Ambiguity, teacher group membership was not found to be a significant predictor variable ( $F = .217$ ). Although the literature suggests that confusion over goals and responsibilities is a major distressor among educators, the position of a teacher group within the school setting does not significantly contribute to such Role Ambiguity.

#### Relationship Between Role Stress and Burnout

The second research question examined the relationship between the role stress components and the perceived intensity of burnout. Hierarchical multiple regression procedures were again used to analyze this relationship for each teacher group. Tables 3-5 summarize the results for each aspect of burnout.

Table 3 summarizes the multiple regression results for the first aspect of burnout, Emotional Exhaustion. Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity emerged as significant predictors for four teacher groups. For the fifth group, school psychologists, only Role Conflict was a significant predictor variable.

Table 3  
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results Predicting Emotional  
Exhaustion on the Maslach Burnout Inventory for the Five Teacher  
Groups

| Variable              | Mult R2 | R2 Change | Fb        |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| School Social Workers |         |           |           |
| Demographic Variables | .15643  |           |           |
| Role Conflict         | .29546  | .13900    | 19.53**   |
| Role Ambiguity        | .33161  | .03618    | 6.26*     |
| School Psychologists  |         |           |           |
| Demographic Variables | .06399  |           |           |
| Role Conflict         | .30648  | .24249    | 66.784**  |
| Role Ambiguity        | .31667  | .01019    | 2.83      |
| Reading Specialists   |         |           |           |
| Demographic Variables | .05875  |           |           |
| Role Conflict         | .26927  | .21052    | 99.494**  |
| Role Ambiguity        | .29549  | .02623    | 12.172**  |
| Guidance Counselors   |         |           |           |
| Demographic Variables | .04967  |           |           |
| Role Conflict         | .24433  | .19466    | 123.905** |
| Role Ambiguity        | .27763  | .03330    | 22.125**  |
| Classroom Teachers    |         |           |           |
| Demographic Variables | .02535  |           |           |
| Role Conflict         | .18832  | .16297    | 93.765**  |
| Role Ambiguity        | .22274  | .03442    | 20.633**  |

\* p. < .05; \*\* p. < .01

Table 4 summarizes the multiple regression results for the second aspect of burnout, Depersonalization. Again, Role Conflict emerged as a significant predictor variable for each teacher group. In addition, Role Ambiguity was also a major predictor of Depersonalization for classroom teachers, reading specialists, and guidance counselors.

Table 4  
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results Predicting  
Depersonalization on the Maslach Burnout Inventory for the Five  
Teacher Groups

| Variable              | Mult R2 | R2 Change | Fb |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|----|
| School Social Workers |         |           |    |
| Demographic Variables | .21704  |           |    |

|                       |        |        |          |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Role Conflict         | .32474 | .10770 | 15.782** |
| Role Ambiguity        |        |        |          |
| School Psychologists  |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .15836 |        |          |
| Role Conflict         | .23244 | .07408 | 28.53**  |
| Role Ambiguity        | .23943 | .00699 | 1.67     |
| Reading Specialists   |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .1220  |        |          |
| Role Conflict         | .21470 | .09270 | 38.633** |
| Role Ambiguity        | .23185 | .01715 | 7.301**  |
| Guidance Counselors   |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .08835 |        |          |
| Role Conflict         | .21970 | .13135 | 80.966** |
| Role Ambiguity        | .25722 | .03752 | 24.250** |
| Classroom Teachers    |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .06339 |        |          |
| Role Conflict         | .14145 | .806   | 42.548** |
| Role Ambiguity        | .17168 | .03023 | 17.003** |

\* p. < .05; \*\* p. < .01

Table 5 summarizes the multiple regression results for the third aspect of burnout, Personal Accomplishment. Role Ambiguity emerged as the significant predictor variable for each group. Role Conflict, however, did not emerge as a major predictor variable.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Results Predicting Personal Accomplishment Subscale on the Maslach Burnout Inventory for the Five Teacher Groups

| Variables             | Mult R2 | R2 Change | Fb       |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|----------|
| School Social Workers |         |           |          |
| Demographic Variables | .12704  |           |          |
| Role Ambiguity        | .21653  | .08949    | 11.31 ** |
| Role Conflict         | .22353  | .00700    | 0.88     |
| School Psychologists  |         |           |          |
| Demographic Variables | .05157  |           |          |
| Role Ambiguity        | .17081  | .11924    | 27.48 ** |
| Role Conflict         | .17249  | .00168    | 0.39     |
| Reading Specialists   |         |           |          |
| Demographic Variables | .06470  |           |          |
| Role Ambiguity        | .15522  | .09052    | 35.15 ** |
| Role Conflict         | .16455  | .00933    | 3.65     |

|                       |        |        |          |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Guidance Counselors   |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .03148 |        |          |
| Role Ambiguity        | .12822 | .09674 | 53.37**  |
| Role Conflict         | .13400 | .00578 | 3.20     |
| Classroom Teachers    |        |        |          |
| Demographic Variables | .05645 |        |          |
| Role Ambiguity        | .16164 | .10519 | 58.59 ** |
| Role Conflict         | .16431 | .00267 | 1.49     |

\* p. < .05; \*\* p. < .01

#### Comparisons of Teacher Groups on the Subscales of the MBI

The final research question concerned the effects of teacher group membership upon perceptions of burnout after the effects of the demographic variables and role stress components had been removed. The multiple regression results summarized in Table 6 indicate that teacher group membership is a significant predictor for each aspect of burnout (i.e. Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment).

Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results to Determine The Effect of Teacher Group Membership on Each Subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory

| Variable              | Subscale of the MBI     |                           |                           |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|                       | Emotional Exhaustion    | Depersonalization         | Personal Accomplishment   |
|                       | Inc. R2                 | Inc. R2                   | Inc. R2                   |
| Demographic Variables | 0.02035                 | 0.07064                   | 0.02693                   |
| Role Stress           | 0.21617                 | 0.17430                   | 0.09927                   |
| Teacher Groups        | 0.00665 **<br>(F=14.51) | 0.20686 **<br>(F = 67.69) | 0.02717 **<br>(F = 52.96) |
| b Weights for Groups  |                         |                           |                           |
| School Social Workers | -.02750                 | -.07051                   | 0.07718                   |
| School Psychologists  | -.03988                 | -.17183                   | 0.03494                   |
| Reading Specialists   | -.04031                 | 0.08810                   | -0.14174                  |
| Guidance Counselors   | -.07211                 | -0.14422                  | 0.22118                   |
| Classroom Teachers    | .17980                  | 0.30746                   | -0.19156                  |

\* p. < .05; \*\* p. < .01

Scheffe post hoc procedures indicate that all supportive service groups reported significantly less burnout (p. < .01)

along the Emotional Exhaustion dimension than did classroom teachers. There were no significant differences among the supportive service groups, however, for this aspect of burnout.

Considering Depersonalization, Scheffe post hoc procedures indicated that all supportive service teacher groups reported significantly less burnout ( $p. < .01$ ) along this dimension than did classroom teachers. In addition, reading specialists also exhibited significantly greater levels of perceived intensity of burnout than did guidance counselors or school psychologists at the .01 level.

Concerning the final aspect of burnout, Personal Accomplishment, teacher group membership was again found to be a significant predictor ( $F=52.96$ ). Scheffe post hoc procedures found that instructional teacher groups, (i.e. classroom teachers and reading specialists) reported significantly higher levels of burnout along this dimension than did the remaining teacher groups (i.e. school social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors). From a different perspective, guidance counselors reported significantly less burnout along the Personal Accomplishment dimension than did any other teacher group except school social workers.

## Discussion

Three major questions guided this research. The first considered the differences in role stress among the five teacher groups involved in this study. Average responses by members of the five teacher groups were in the moderate range. These findings are similar to those of Schwab (1980) who studied members of the Massachusetts Teacher's Association and Crane (1981) who studied large city special education teachers in Connecticut.

Findings also support the theories of Miles (1976) and Kahn (1964) who suggest that position within an organization influences the nature and extent of the role stress experienced by workers. In particular, Miles holds that occupants of "boundary" positions are apt to experience greater levels of Role Conflict because of the increased number of role-senders and their distance from the inner workings of the organization. In this study educators occupying such boundary position (i.e. school social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors) reported significantly higher levels of Role Conflict than did members of teacher groups offering instruction deep within the school setting.

Teacher groups did not differ significantly however, in Role Ambiguity, the second aspect of role stress. While the literature is silent concerning differences in perceptions of Role Ambiguity among teacher groups, it may be that global pressures which are not confined to position within an organization contribute to Role Ambiguity. Kahn et.al (1964), for example, attributed the rise of role ambiguity to rapid changes in size, complexity, and programs within an organization which alter interdependencies and created new demands upon workers (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970). Miles ((1976) further suggests that Role Ambiguity is related to personal and job involvement outcomes. It may be that level of involvement is a more important variable related to perceptions of Role Ambiguity than is teacher group membership.

Concerning the second research question, findings again support those of Schwab(1980) and Crane(1982) who examined the predictors of burnout among classroom teachers and special education teachers, respectively. Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity explained a significant amount of the variance for the Emotional Exhaustion aspect of burnout for all teacher groups except school psychologists. Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity remained significant predictors of the second aspect of burnout, Depersonalization, for three teacher groups: reading specialists, guidance counselors, and classroom teacher. For the two remaining supportive service groups, school social workers and school psychologists, only Role Conflict was a significant predictor variable. For the final aspect of burnout, Personal Accomplishment, Role Ambiguity emerged as the significant predictor variable.

Concerning the magnitude of the relationship between role stress and burnout, it should be noted that for both Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization the R2s for the supportive service groups are appreciably higher than those of classroom teachers thereby pointing to the greater importance of role stress variable for specialists. No appreciable differences were found, however, for Personal Accomplishment.

The final research question compared the perceived levels of burnout in the five teacher groups. Classroom teachers reported significantly higher levels of burnout along the Emotional Exhaustion dimension than did members of supportive service groups. Classroom teachers in previous studies ranked overcrowded classrooms and schools under "management tensions" which may not affect members of supportive service groups in the same way. In addition, pressures related to planning, grading, increased paperwork, and the fast and structured pace of the school day (Openshaw, 1970; Worcester Survey, 1980) may affect classroom teachers' Emotional Exhaustion differently than members of other teacher groups.

Classroom teachers also reported significantly higher levels of burnout along the Depersonalization dimension than did members of the other teacher groups. Several factors may contribute to this. First, it appears that Depersonalization may be more likely to occur in classroom settings where a minimum amount of time is available for meeting teachers' personal needs. Although not directly supported by this research, it may be that classroom teachers differ because they offer systematic instruction to groups of students within a rigid working schedule over an extended time period; supportive service group members work in office settings providing diagnosis, specific instruction, or counseling to individuals or small groups within a flexible time schedule for a shorter period of time. All or a combination of these differences may contribute to greater feelings of Depersonalization for the classroom teacher. Reading specialists also reported significantly higher levels of Depersonalization than did guidance counselors and school psychologists. Again the structure of the instructional day may impact upon feelings of Depersonalization for this teacher group compared to those who have a greater command over their time.

The five teacher groups also differed significantly along the Personal Accomplishment dimension. School psychologists, school social workers, and guidance counselors perceived significantly less burnout than did classroom teachers and reading specialists. Sources of perceived burnout for these instructional teacher groups may include the following conditions within schools. First, such teacher groups are primarily accountable for the academic progress of students perceived the highest levels of burnout along the Personal Accomplishment dimension. Secondly, feelings of accomplishment may be linked to on-going constructive feedback which is continually available to members of the counselor, psychologist, and social worker teacher groups and not readily available to reading specialists and classroom teachers. Few parents satisfied with the progress of their child are likely to come to school and compliment the teachers, especially at the middle and high school levels. Third, teachers struggle with

their wishes for student achievement at a time when, in the words of the Commission on Excellence," students abandoned academic and vocational studies for the "general track studies." The time-honored and desired "open admissions" status of elementary and secondary schools may create the same difficulties currently plaguing post-secondary institutions with "open admissions" policies. These include: (1) goal confusion, (2) student disappointment, and (3) faculty discontent. In the words of Edward Moulton, chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents: "We have to let people/students/ know what to expect." It may be that what is true for students also holds for teachers since Role Ambiguity is a major predictor variable of perceived intensity of burnout along this dimension for all teacher groups. Personal Accomplishment, which is the least explained dimension of burnout, warrants considerable further attention.

#### Abstract

This research was undertaken to determine if teacher group membership was a significant predictor of role stress and perceptions of burnout for the five teacher groups under consideration (i.e., school social workers, school psychologists, guidance counselors, reading specialists, and classroom teachers). It was also designed to determine of relationship of role stress to perceptions of burnout for the five teacher groups. Results indicate that teacher group membership is a significantly predictor of Role Conflict and of the three aspects of burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. It was not a significant predictor of Role Ambiguity, however.

It was also found that role stress is a significant predictor variable for each aspect of burnout for each teacher group. Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity were major predictors of Emotional Exhaustion for four teacher groups. They were also significant predictors for three groups for the Depersonalization aspect of burnout, while only Role Conflict was a significant predictor for school psychologists and school social workers. On the final aspect of burnout, Role ambiguity emerged as the significant predictor variable.

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